

John and Ellen Eirhart House  
1220 6th Avenue  
Fourth Ward Neighborhood  
Altoona  
Blair County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5849

HABS  
PA,  
7-ALTO,  
46-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JOHN AND ELLEN EIRHART HOUSE

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Location: 1220 6th Avenue

Date of Erection: ca. 1892

Description: This two-and-one-half-story, three-bay, cross-gable house is somewhat different from other surviving examples; a bargeboard in the front gable arches at the bottom to complement the arched top of the gable window (see, for example, the Healy house, 1415 3rd Ave.\*). Other windows are square with pedimented surrounds. Like many side-gable and cross-gable examples, the Eirhart House has four pairs of brackets spaced below the front cornice with an additional pair below the returns at each side. A band of sawtooth applique runs beneath the eave. The house is clad in horizontal novelty wood siding.

Also unusual is the placement of fenestration in the front facade. Although the cross gable is symmetrically placed, the three second-floor windows and the door and picture window below are offset toward the left, creating an odd effect. A later brick porch with sawtooth corbelling and flat roof, typical of those found throughout the survey area, opens at left front directly to the house's front door. There is a narrow exterior side chimney. Cornice returns are boxed in on the side gables.

History: The present house appears to have been built on the site of an earlier and structurally similar building. In February 1862 John H. and Ellen G. Eirhart purchased a 50' x 120' lot from two Philadelphia merchants who had acquired the land from the Wrights six years before. John Eirhart, a molder, is listed at 1220 6th Ave. in the 1873 Altoona directory.

Tax records as early as 1866 show "Earhart," a molder, assessed for one frame house and lot at \$250. By 1871 he owned a house and half-lot on 6th Avenue, and a double house on 7th Avenue. The present structure, however, is stylistically incompatible with such an early building date. It may be the one outlined on the 1882 Altoona map, but tax records suggest a later construction date. In 1892 Eirhart was taxed for 29' of land and a house with the current address valued at \$1,900. This is probably the first appearance of the present structure in records.

John Eirhart died on March 15, 1901, but his widow remained there in 1919. Ellen Eirhart passed the 27.4' x 120' lot containing this house to Vesta A. Hamilton in March 1923. Although she does not appear in the 1925 directory, the widow of Charles Hamilton lived here in 1930. Hamilton sold the house to Lester and Maude Berry for \$1,700 in 1936. The Berry family lived here in 1939: Maude E.; Lester, a crane operator; Helen K., a student; Grace E., a student nurse; and Ralph H., a member of the U.S. Navy. The Berrys acquired the title to 1222 6th Ave. as well; in 1950 they sold both properties to Harold F. and Mae R. Hanwell. In 1951 Harold and Mae R. Hanwell were in residence while he worked as an electrician for the PRR. Blanche R. Hanwell, a widow, also lived here. Harold Hanwell died in September 1968, after which the current owners acquired the property.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1888. Deed books: H/407, N/184, 305/630, 478/227, 625/184, 880/200. City directories. Tax assessment records.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.